

# NATURE in FOCUS

## Bulletin No.4

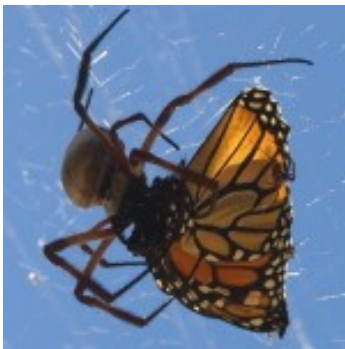
Presented by “As It Is” Photography Jenny Rose

## Three Summer Spiders



### Number 1. Golden Orb Weaver (*Nephila ornata*)

The “typical” orb-weaver spiders (family **Araneidae**) are the most common group of builders of spiral wheel-shaped webs found in gardens, fields and forests. Their common name is taken from the round shape of this typical web. Orb-webs are also produced by other members of other families e.g. “golden” orb-weavers (**Nephilidae**) (Photo top left), the “gold” referring to the silk of the web, not the spider. Orb-weaving spiders make suspended, sticky, wheel shaped orb webs in openings between trees and shrubs where insects are likely to fly. The webs are vertical and the spiders usually hang with their head downward. (Photo top left). When a victim flies into the web, the spider recognizes the vibration, rushes out from the centre of the web, stuns the victim with a quick bite (Photo 2nd left) then rapidly wraps the victim in silk (Photo 3rd left). When the prey is secure, the orb-weaver administers a bite and sits back to allow the deadly venom to do its job. Once all movement has stopped, the spider takes the meal to the centre of the web or hangs it up for later. If the victim is a venomous prey, such as a wasp, then biting precedes wrapping. Flying insects such as flies, beetles and bugs, are common prey. Butterflies and day-active wasps are sometimes caught (Photos 2nd and 3rd left). In the webs of Golden Orb Weavers you will often see the dried up husks of prey hanging in neat rows like a bunch of trophies (Photo top left). The female Golden Orb Spider is a big spider and is extremely large compared to the male.



### Number2. Spiny Spider (*Austracantha minax*)

The Spiny Spider as also known as the Jewel Spider, the Christmas Spider and the Six Spined Spider. This spider is also an orb-weaving spider. Each spider makes its own individual web. The ring of black spines around the abdomen and the distinctive yellow, white and black markings make this spider easy to identify (Photos 4th and bottom left). Some late specimens are commonly black. Each spider has different markings which aids in identification (compare Photos 4th left and 2nd from left bottom). These spiders catch their own prey as referred to above (Photo 2nd from left bottom). Males are about half the size of females. This spider is rarely known to bite but the bite is recorded as mildly painful with a local reaction.



### Number 3. Dewdrop Spider (*Argyrodes antipodianus*)

The Dewdrop Spider is also known as the Quicksilver Spider because of their bright silver abdomen (Photo bottom 3rd from left). These are minute spiders, the females being only 2-3mm long and the males even smaller. These spiders are also orb-weavers, but prefer to invade and reside in a host's web where they can feed on small trapped insect that are not eaten by the host (Photo 4th from left bottom), i.e. they are known as kleptoparasites— they steal other spiders' prey. This keeps the large web clean from flying insects that are much too small for the larger spider to bother with. However, the dewdrops are not too timid to take a share of the larger spider's meal and will even partake at the same time The dewdrop spider is quite communal and webs can be occupied by several individuals.

